

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUEBEC 00073 082127Z

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SUBJECT: QUEBEC GOVERNMENT ORDERS TEACHERS BACK TO WORK.

REF: QUEBEC T-57, QUEBEC A-18

1. SUMMARY QUEBEC GOV'T TOOK LONG-THREATENED ACTION APRIL 7 INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO END WIDESPREAD DISORDER IN EDUCATION SECTOR. PROPOSED BILL 23 WOULD BAN ALL STRIKES, WORK SLOWDOWNS, AND HARASSMENT TACTICS BY TEACHERS AS WELL AS ALL LOCKOUTS BY COLLEGES AND SCHOOL COMMISSIONS. LAW WOULD BE EFFECTIVE FOR 80 DAY PERIOD, UNTIL END OF JUNE WHEN SCHOOL YEAR WILL HAVE TERMINATED. QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY EXPECTED TO RATIFY BILL RAPIDLY IN SPITE OF PARTI QUEBECOIS OPPOSITION. HOWEVER, OFFICIAL SANCTION MAY BE DELAYED UNTIL AFTER MASS TEACHER DEMONSTRATION EXPECTED TODAY AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. GOQ ACTION LEAVES UNIONS WITH DECISION TO NEGOTIATE FROM WEAK POSITION OR VIOLATE LAW. END SUMMARY.

2. RESPONDING TO INCREASED PRESSURE TACTICS BY TEACHERS AND HOSPITAL WORKERS WHOSE UNIONS ARE GROUPED IN A COMMON FRONT (REFTEL), QUEBEC GOV'T HAS TAKEN ACTION DESIGNED TO SAVE THREATENED SCHOOL YEAR AND BRING 80 DAY CALM TO SECTOR BY OUTLAWING ALL WORK DISRUPTIONS OR LOCKOUTS UNTIL THE END OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL SESSION. COMMON FRONT BEGAN STEPPED UP ACTIVITY ON MARCH 22 BY LAUNCHING FIRST IN CONTINUING SERIES OF 24-HR WALKOUTS IN SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS

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PAGE 02 QUEBEC 00073 082127Z

THROUGHOUT PROVINCE. MOST RECENT OF THESE LED TO PARTIAL

EVACUATION OF HOSPITALS, SERIOUS DISRUPTION IN MEDICAL SERVICE, AND INCREASE PRESSURE ON GOV'T TO TAKE ACTION. IN PUTTING THE EMPHASIS OF ITS NEW BILL ON DEALING WITH PROBLEMS IN THE SCHOOLS, GOQ IS COUNTING ON EARLIER LEGISLATION DEALING WITH ESSENTIAL SERVICES (SEE REFAIR) TO KEEP ORDER IN THE HOSPITALS. NEVERTHELESS, THE BILL PROPOSED YESTERDAY WOULD AMEND THAT LEGISLATION TO GIVE EMPLOYERS RECOURSE TO INJUNCTION IN DEALING WITH HOSPITAL WORKERS.

3. A DISPUTED POINT IN TEACHER NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN TEACHERS' DEMAND FOR MEDIATOR AND GOV'T OFFER OF OBSERVER. NEW LEGISLATION WOULD ESTABLISH 3 MEMBER COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE CURRENT DISPUTE AND REPORT OBSERVATIONS TO GOV T WITHIN 60 DAYS. FINDINGS WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE MADE PUBLIC. TERMS OF LAW PROVIDE FOR STIFF PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE IN ADDITION TO PRESUMPTION OF GUILT ON PART OF TEACHERS IN SUSPECTED NON-COMPLIANCE. PENALTIES INCLUDE FINES FROM 50-500 DOLLARS PER DAY FOR INDIVIDUALS TO 5000-50,000 DOLLARS PER DAY AGAINST UNIONS OR OFFENDING SCHOOL OFFICIALS. LAW WOULD EVEN GO SO FAR AS TO REVOKE UNION ACCREDITATION FOR AT LEAST 1 YEAR.

4. BILL HAS BEEN THROUGH 2 READINGS AND NOW APPEARS CERTAIN TO BE LEGISLATED INTO LAW WITHIN 24 HOURS. ATTEMPTS BY PQ TO BLOCK IMMEDIATE INTRODUCTION AND READINGS OF BILL UNSUCCESSFUL. PQ, LIKE TEACHERS UNIONS, FAVORS MEDIATION OF CONFLICT. BILL WILL PROBABLY NOT GO INTO EFFECT BEFORE EXPECTED MASS DEMONSTRATION OF TEACHERS TAKES PLACE OUTSIDE QUEBEC ASSEMBLY THIS AFTERNOON. DEMONSTRATION HAD BEEN PLANNED LONG BEFORE SPECIAL LAW INTRODUCED AND WILL BE HELD ESPECIALLY AS GOV T LEGISLATION WILL MAKE IT LAST SUCH LEGAL DISRUPTION OF SCHOOL YEAR.

5. COMMENT: GOQ HAS CHOSEN TO TAKE LEGISLATIVE ACTION IN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR WHERE PUBLIC SUPPORT HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN ON SIDE OF UNIONS WHILE COUNTING ON PREVIOUSLY ENACTED ESSENTIAL SERVICES LAW TO CONTROL MORE SENSITIVE HOSPITAL AND SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR. TIMING OF ACTION, HOWEVER, MAKES IT CLEAR THAT GOQ FEELS THAT RECENT DISRUPTIONS OF HOSPITAL SERVICES CREATED CLIMATE FAVORABLE TO ENACTMENT OF A SPECIAL LAW IN EDUCATION FIELD WITH SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR ENTIRE COMMON FRONT. AS EXPECTED, UNIONS HAVE CUT OFF NEGOTIATIONS AND CONDEMNED SPECIAL LAW. HAVING BACKED THEMSELVES INTO A CORNER FROM WHICH THE GOV'T HAS NOW CUT OFF ESCAPE, UNIONS UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 QUEBEC 00073 082127Z

FIND THEMSELVES FORCED TO NEGOTIATE FROM A WEAKENED POSITION OR VIOLATE THE LAW. WHILE NEW UNION STRATEGY WILL TAKE SEVERAL DAYS TO DECIDE, THEIR LEADERS, INCLUDING 3 WHO WERE JAILED IN 1972 FOR COUNSELING VIOLATION OF THE LAW, HAVE INDICATED THAT UNION SHOULD AVOID OPEN CONFRONTATION WITH NEW LAW.
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